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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2016

TAGS: BE PGOV PREL PARM UN EU IR KNNP

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON IRAN: APPROACHING THE EU IN ADVANCE OF THE SEPTEMBER 15 GAERC MEETING

REF: STATE 150777

Classified By: POLCOUNS TED ANDREWS. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Poloff relayed reftel points to Jean-Luc Bodson, Deputy Chief of Staff, responsible for middle eastern affairs, in the Belgian Foreign Ministry. Bodson said Belgium will likely follow the European consensus on sanctions, but called the possibility of sanctions "a touchy issue." With the passing of the August 31 deadline, there was a "credibility" issue among allies that argued in favor of taking steps against Iran.

¶2. (C) Marc Van Heukelen, the Deputy Chief of Staff who deals with EU matters, told polcouns the ministers would be looking to Solana for leadership on this issue. The Belgians fully agree on the need for a strong and united message at a time when the international community is developing effective sanctions. The Belgians remain interested in what happens if sanctions fail to prompt a change of course in Iran, Van Heukelen said.

¶3. (C) Bodson said Belgium would effectively adopt a "wait and see" approach, eventually falling in line with the EU consensus. Belgian Foreign Minister DeGucht has no current plans to visit Iran nor speak with Iranian officials.

KOROLOGOS

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